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## THE SHORE AND THE MOORLAND.

THE whistle of the curlew overhead told us that the birds were coming from the moorland to follow up the outgoing tide; so taking our stick, we proceeded for our evening walk by the shore. We had been sitting at the front of the house, watching a blackbird and a thrush hopping out and in from a bean-field, and feeding over the upturned earth where the potatoes had been dug. They had sung their song of courtship, had reared their families, and now in this autumn season were enjoying a well-earned leisure. But it was the larger birds that presently fascinated us; those that bred on moorlands and rocky fastnesses and on the shingly beach, and who, after rearing their broods, met on the shore to mingle their cries with the ever-changing voice of the sea.

Our house stood on a narrow belt of fertile land that divided the shore from the moorland, and it was over this that the birds took their daily migration. To us it was like a watch-tower, for we could tell with precision the time when the waters were about to turn, be it by night or by day, by the clear round whistle of the passing curlew. No bird has a keener instinct of punctuality than he. He never dallies with time, and when he once sets out from the moorland, to keep his appointment with the risen tide, he goes straight for the goal, never halting until he reaches the shore.

The pathway from the house led over the fields, down to the dell where the stream flowed; and it followed the waters until they reached the shore. As we passed the rows of stooks in the wheat-field, a covey of partridges rose, just where we had seen a number of short-eared owls flying at mid-day. The water in the stream was low, and full of soft music as it flowed over the pebbly bed, and fell in gentle waterfalls into the quiet pools, in which were reflected the hanging ivy

that drooped from the damp and moss-grown rock. Nearly all the wild-flowers were gone, but there was still left to admire the light-blue scabious, resting gracefully on its tall stem, and the white and the blue pansy, looking out with tender eyes from among the crops and the tall grass. The wild roses and the blossom of the hawthorn had left behind them in their hips and haws a rich provision of winter fare for the birds; the mountain-ash gloried in its clusters of ruddy rowans, the cherished dainty of the starling; and the bramble bushes were offering to thrifty house-keepers a ripe and a plenteous harvest.

On the pasture-fields that rise from the dell were troops of starlings, gathering together for their autumn manoeuvres; some black-coated daws; and flocks of seamews, those fair-weather sailors who affect the aquatic costume, but give the stormy waters a wide berth. And there was the solitary song of a yellow-hammer coming from a clump of bushes lying in the hollow of a farther dell, unusual for the time of year, and serving as a reminder of the joyous outpourings of the feathered tribe on the arrival of spring.

On descending to the shore, a quiet and peaceful scene lay before us. The grass flows down from the braes to the great boulder stones that mark the line to which the tide rises. Smooth and freshly green, it is like a great lawn, broken in places by clusters of large moss-grown stones, intersected with bracken, among which the rabbit takes shelter. A few cows and some sheep give a pastoral look to the scene. Pools of dark-brown water are near the edges and round some of the boulders, borrowing their colour from the peaty soil; and numerous holes in the grass, close to the large rocks, show where the British rat has his abode.

No human being is in sight: we are alone with nature. All is tranquillity: there is even rest in the sound of the waves as they break on the shore. We are sheltered from the wind, for the braes, catching the breeze, send it on

to the uplands. These braes are circled and terraced in places, as if designed by nature for amphitheatres. Over one of them is a hawk poising in mid-air, apparently scanning the great cluster of bushes below, where the smaller birds reside at resting-time. He circles slowly round, and his swift movement flies farther and farther. He is a wary bird, and keeps his wings close, thinking, doubtless, from the probings of an evil conscience, that we have sinister designs against him. Farther on the hills are replaced by rocky headlands; water can be seen trickling their scant supply of mountain stream over them; and where a rock-pigeon has flown there is a cleavage in the headlands in which he and his compeers have their abode. Near are caves where wild-fowl take shelter, and there are holes in the shore in which the otter skulks. Farther, looking toward the island of Pladda, the great cliffs, on the face of which some, decry the features of a man. He has certainly a brow of a Beethoven; and, while the sea raged below, many memories must have been stored there of the great depth and power of nature's diapason.

Coming slowly from the direction in which these cliffs stand is a gray heron, his great wings flapping clumsily as he flies over the surface of the water. He has left his solitary station by the moorland stream so that he may follow the ebbing tide. He does not fly far, but settles on a rock at the edge of the water, and to the untutored eye appears to form part of the surroundings. Neither curlew nor gull can be seen near him. They have too much of the commonality about them for him, and are apt to be rough on his high-born manners. He is an aristocrat among the feathered species, and prefers to keep them at their distance. Cautious and wary in his movements, the heron has no faith in man. Yet, what more fascinating figure is there on the solitary shore than this tall and statuesque bird, standing, as he may be, on one leg, and his bill drooping in line with the tapering feathers that form a graceful pendant to the lower part of the long neck.

Flocks of lapwings come over the braes, and skimming along the shore, disappear where the boat and the lobster creels lie. They have not now that restless anxiety, shown by them at the appearance of a stranger, when their young are but nestlings. They pay no heed to us, and their distant cry of 'Peewit' has lost all the mournful tone with which it is accented when the bird tries to decoy the stranger from its nest on the pasture-fields and the moorlands. Moving in the direction in which they have gone, we hear the whistle of the red-shank, and speedily a number of them pass, skimming over the water and flying as swifts do. They also are children of the moorland,

and they will make the shore their daily pasture until spring once more beckons them to their breeding-ground. A number of oystercatchers follow, their full dress of black and white being seen to advantage. As they pass they utter their sharp and piercing whistle, and we can hear it continued as they make toward the stony beach, where in the breeding season they laid their eggs, and where at night they snugly repose with their bills under their feathers. A number of puffins come along, showing their snow-white breasts and their remarkable red bills, which remind us of those of the parrot. They are natives of the great rock that stands some miles out to sea. Ailsa Craig, like her twin-sister at the mouth of the Forth, has a great community of bird life; and some of them come to the shore to join the throng that follows up the tide. Two of her well-known inhabitants are now soaring above and close to us: the gannet, or solan goose, and the herring gull. Other birds are seen floating on the surface of the water, while some show their beautiful white plumage as they sail towards the land.

Many flocks of the feathered tribe have come over the braes from the moorland, and over the breaking wave from the distant rocky community. Notwithstanding these arrivals, one wonders where all the birds have gone to. They come in flocks, and then disappear. Scarce a dozen birds can be seen along the shore. It wants a quick eye to detect the curlew, the lapwing, or the heron; their coats so completely harmonise with the objects around them. Many of the birds must be hidden by the great boulders as they feed among the seaware left bare by the tide.

While thus wondering, we turned the corner where the boat lay. Crouching behind a rock was Rover, the gray-coated collie belonging to Frank, son of a neighbouring farmer, and a redoubted sportsman. Rover gave us a look, as much as to say: Approach no farther; my master and I have business on hand. He occasionally raised his head in expectancy, or peered round the rock as if to satisfy his curiosity. We knew the old story well. Frank must have come over the braes, the usual pantomime being gone through on starting, by his ordering the reluctant Rover to stay behind. Rover waiting, then cautiously following at a distance; watching his master, then making up to him at the report of the gun, as if eager to assist in capturing the spoil. We scanned the rocks for a time, but could see nothing of his master. At last a brown cap was seen peering round a rock, and Frank took a farther step in advance, as if every movement required the greatest caution. There he was again, with body bent and head half uplifted, as he moved round several boulders. It was hard work creeping among these rocks, but Frank was a

determined sportsman, and bent on securing his prey. At last he disappeared behind a big boulder, and for several minutes there was silence. A curlew rose as if disturbed, but again settled down. A few plovers flew off with a scream, and some lapwings, after fluttering about, once more resumed their feeding. It seemed as if there was just the breath of distrust among the birds, but it was not sufficiently strong to make them take to flight. At last it came. A flash of smoke, and the gun reported itself over a sheltered sheet of water from which two ducks rose. Rover gave a bound, and we followed.

'Ducks are fine eating, sor,' remarked Frank, as he gave a longing look towards the escaping fowl.

But where were the birds at whose absence we had marvelled? The air was full of them. Crying, screaming, whistling, uttering angry croaks, if not imprecations. They were in hundreds. Moorland bird, shore bird, and bird of the rocky fastness. Did we say we only saw one heron? There were nearly a score: one of them had stood just close to us all unknown. All were now flying from the spot. The shore had been disturbed, the birds would be more wary, and there was little hope of our seeing anything further of them for the night.

Walking along, and leaving the boulders behind, we came on a great stretch of firm sand. In many places it was perforated with holes, where the sandpipers had been probing for food. We discovered, what was unusual at this time of year, the imprint of a hare's foot. Puss generally comes down from the hills when the snow is on the ground, and, with the deer, seeks the more open pasturage of the shoreland. Farther on were the marks of the otter, more especially round a large rock, where they love to scamper when the tide is full. Over the waters we could see a porpoise, and in the distance there was the gray head of a seal. A stoat was observed entering the stone dyke that ran alongside the shingle. He and his confrères build their nests there; they lay tribute on the feathered tribe who frequent the shore, and who may be caught napping, not merely for food but plumage, to assist in the construction of their nests.

The mist came on, and hid the farther coast, covered the trail of the passing liner, and Ailsa Craig became but a shadow. Rain-clouds were approaching from where we had seen Kintyre, and where lay the distant coast of Ulster. We turned to retrace our steps. The tide had receded considerably from the sandy beach, but it did not show so great an ebb by the boulders. There it was deeper, and the descent more sudden. Frank, always on the lookout, crossed the rocks, seized the flotsam and the jetsam which the sea had thrown up; and hauling the timber beyond high-tide mark, left it there for the rain to wash and prepare it for winter fuel. No saying how far some of the wreckage had come, and what spar had been the last hope of the shipwrecked mariner.

The wind blew and the rain poured all night.

With the morning it brightened; but there was a heavy gale on, and huge lines of waves thundered on the shore. The waterfalls poured over the cliffs tumultuously. Some of them had a double fall; and, as the wind blew, it caught the waters, and in the light formed spray rainbows over them. The scenery in cloudland was constantly changing, a perfect kaleidoscope of wonders, occasionally obscured in parts by the dash of spray that came from a rain-cloud. It was truly a wild scene, and in marked contrast to the quietness of the previous evening. The bounding waves, the rocks and the sandy beach covered with a solid mass of tangle—a harvest of

torn up by the waters and broken. Few birds were to be seen: there was too much for them. A few puffins, and a number of sandpipers were picked out. Doubtless, could we see far enough, we would find it was the delight of the shore and moorland. As we passed along the shore, bending ourselves to the blast, we were stung by the driven sea-spray, and the shelter of a large rock was not unwelcome against a sharp shower of rain. The fishing stream was full, the water coming down from the moorland brook, its night's brewing; and where it rolled over the stones its foam was a liquid tortoise colour. There were two benighted fishermen trying with fly-hook to catch sea-trout, forgetful that a worm, carefully run into the pool next to or under the bank, was the only effective method of sport for the day.

We walked by the side of the swollen waters. It was the stream that came from the moorland, and in its long journey through the heathery uplands knew well the birds that passed to the shore at ebb of tide. The waters ran through a narrow glen, we clothed with trees, and up the steep banks of which heart's-tongue ferns were the envy of the botanist.

We arrived at the moorland. A great stretch of heather, flowing for miles over undulating peat and marsh bog, rising up and over the hills, and covering the land as far as the eye could reach. It was wet, and soaked with the night's rain; and in places there could be seen a misty haze where the shower was falling. Silvery streaks of water were running down the hillsides to join the stream, which, flowing through the hollow in the low-lying ground, took its sinuous way through the moorland. We passed up one of the hill-roads, its stony bottom clean and bare with the rush of the waters. The heather was at its best, and there was something refreshing in its rich honey smell. As the eye roamed over the moorland, it was wonderful to find what a wealth of colour lay on its lap, rich and beautiful, and blended together like some fine piece of tapestry-work. The birds were rising in places, and calling to one another. The lapwing could be heard, and the whistle of the curlew came sharp and weird as if from one of their sentinels. By yonder stream they love to dwell. To them it is the most sacred of all sanctuaries. It is their home, where they have been reared, and to which they resort when the storm rages. And as the days shorten, they will be joined by flocks of their brethren, who,

coming from the far north, will keep them company through the winter in their daily migrations between the Shore and the Moorland.

R. A. M.

## THE FASCINATION OF THE KING.

### CHAPTER V.—LIFE IN THE MÉDANGS.

It was a strange experience that waking next morning in the bedroom of the king's palace. At first I imagined myself back in Venice; but the shape of the room, the walls, the ceiling, and the furniture very soon undeceived me. They were all of a different stamp from any I had met before. After the first confused wonderment had passed away, I sprang from my bed and ran to the window. It overlooked the great courtyard, in which I discovered a company of infantry, drilling under a European officer. They were a smart body of men, not unlike our own Goorkhas in appearance, and looked as if, in the event of trouble, they would be able and willing to give an equally good account of themselves. I watched them with considerable interest for upwards of half-an-hour, and then, having taken a bath in an enormous earthenware bowl which I discovered in a curtained alcove, dressed myself and went out into the courtyard we had seen on the previous evening. As far as human beings were concerned, I had it to myself. The fountain in the centre played its tinkling music to the rustling accompaniment of the palm leaves as I sat in the colonnade that surrounded it, and, as if to convince me that I was really in the romantic East, half a dozen small monkeys chattered in the trees and a gigantic peacock preened himself upon the farther wall.

A native servant presently appeared carrying a tray upon which were several cups of coffee and plates containing fruit. I helped myself, and sat down to enjoy it. I had hardly commenced, however, before the king appeared from the opposite side, and on seeing me hurried round the fountain to greet me.

'I trust you have slept well in your new quarters, my lord,' he said, as we shook hands.

'Splendidly,' I answered. 'I did not wake once. Since I got up I have been sitting here trying to convince myself that it is all real, and not some dream from which I shall presently awake.'

'It is very real indeed,' he replied with a laugh. 'If you had been up, as I have, ever since daylight, looking through papers and transacting business with my ministers, I venture to believe you would not find much reason to doubt it.'

'I trust you have discovered that things are scarcely as bad as you were led to believe in Venice?' I said, still wondering what it could have been that had made him come home in so much haste.

'I fear I can scarcely say with truth that I have,' he replied. 'There seems to be an easiness in certain quarters that is cheering, but in others the clouds look black in the extreme. I fear they must of necessity burst of their own weight ere long. I have been informed this morning that the French are pushing up their

troops towards my frontier. Before long they will cross it, and then the trouble will commence. Well, let them come, they will not find me unprepared.'

'Can nothing be done?' I inquired. 'Would not a diplomatic remonstrance be of any avail? Surely in that case the troops would either have to withdraw or show reasonable cause for their presence there.'

'Unfortunately they have discovered their excuse already,' he answered. 'It was that very incident which occasioned the telegram you saw. From what I have been told this morning, it would appear that a party of French soldiers, while pursuing a prisoner who had escaped from their ranks, crossed the boundary of the respective countries, and entered a strip of land which I claim as mine, but over which the French government has begun of late to assert its right of ownership. The commanding officer of one of my forts, seeing the soldiers where he considered they had no right to be, remonstrated with them, and was told, in point of fact, to mind his own business. He thereupon warned them that any farther advance would be regarded as an act of hostility. Upon their disregarding him, he fired upon them, killing six and wounding three others. On the strength of this catastrophe, France has demanded from me the strip of country in question, an indemnity of a million francs, and the life of the officer who gave the command to fire. Naturally my ministers declined to entertain such a monstrous proposal for a moment, and when you know that, you have the situation placed clearly before you.'

'And what is your own feeling in the matter?' I inquired. 'Are you prepared to resist by force of arms in case it should become necessary?'

'I am prepared for anything rather than to allow myself to be deprived of what is undoubtedly my own lawful property,' he answered. 'I have however to remember that a war just now will throw back my young country for years. But better war than injustice. If France gets this, she will want more, and then the life-blood will be slowly but surely drained out of me. But do not let us talk any more about it just now. I am sick to death of the subject. Would you care to accompany me to the battlements and see the view?'

'Nothing would give me greater pleasure,' I answered, as I rose to follow him.

Leaving the courtyard behind us, we passed along a corridor and then up a flight of massive stone steps which eventually brought us out on to the battlements. I only wish, my dear Forsyth, that I could give you some notion of the scene that was then presented to my astonished gaze. The rock upon which the citadel was built rose, as I have already said, directly from the plain to a height of something like three hundred feet. At its foot lay the city spread out like a white pocket-handkerchief. From where we stood we were permitted an uninterrupted view for nearly thirty miles—away to the Mountains of the Wind, as they are picturesquely termed by the natives—before us, and as far as the Hills of Perabundi behind. On our right the jungle



commenced and stretched as far as the eye could reach; while on our left the Médang River twisted and twined like a silver snake till it lost itself in the mists of the far west. In midstream, opposite the wharf where we had disembarked the previous night, lay my yacht, looking scarcely bigger than a cockleshell, the Union Jack still floating at the gaff end.

'Is it not a country of which any sovereign might be proud?' asked the king, who had seated himself on the battlements, whence he watched my admiration. 'And to think that I came here with but one companion, won it for myself, and now am being threatened with the loss of it again.'

Not knowing quite what to say in answer, I prudently held my tongue, and presently he rose and we continued our walk round the wall. The size and strength of the place amazed me. As far as I could gather, not being a military man trained to find defects in defences, it was well-nigh, if not quite, impregnable. The only weak part about it to my mind was the gate; but even there the path was so narrow that it would have been impossible for an enemy to concentrate a sufficient force upon it so as to make much of an attack upon the woodwork. In order, however, that that might be further protected, a peculiar-shaped gallery had been constructed above it whence a steady fire could be kept up upon assailants without any chance of injury to those besieged.

After we had perambulated and explored the entire walls to our satisfaction, we returned to the Fountain Courtyard by the way we had come. Here we discovered the Princess Natalie and Olivia seated waiting for us. As we entered both rose. I noticed that the blind girl, when she spoke to us, and before she had heard either of us speak, turned her face to the person she addressed on each occasion without making a mistake. Indeed I very soon discovered that this was one of her many peculiar gifts. So acute and delicate was her hearing that she could discriminate among a hundred footfalls and never be in error.

While we were talking, a sweet-toned Burmese gong sounded for breakfast, and, Olivia accompanying the king, I following with his sister, we made our way to the sovereign's private dining-hall. It was a pretty room, furnished in the European fashion, and overlooked the great square before the Temple. In compliment to us, I suppose, the meal was served à l'Anglais, though wines and various eastern and continental dishes were placed upon the table for those who cared to partake of them. The servants were all natives, wearing the royal badge upon their turbans. It was clear that they had been excellently schooled in their duties, for they were quick, attentive, and, above all, noiseless.

When the meal was finished we were conducted by the Princess to her own boudoir, which was another elegant apartment, leading off the Fountain Courtyard before mentioned. Like the other rooms, it was also furnished in the European fashion; the walls were panelled and decorated in a most artistic style; a grand piano stood in one corner and a harp in another.

'Natalie,' said the king, as we seated ourselves, 'it would be a pretty welcome to your boudoir if you would sing to us.'

The young girl rose immediately and went over to the latter instrument. Then seating herself, she tilted it towards her, and placing her delicate fingers upon the strings, began an accompaniment. It was a song of Schubert's that she sang; one of those tiny scraps of melody of which one never seems to tire. In this instance I could have listened for hours. Her voice was by no means a powerful one, but its charm lay in its marvellous expression. The recollection of that song has lingered in my brain for three years, and never till my ears are closed by death shall I forget its haunting sweetness.

When she had finished, my royal host invited me to witness a parade of the troops of the garrison. We accordingly excused ourselves and left the ladies to their own devices, while we proceeded to the large courtyard before the palace, where the garrison of the citadel was already drawn up under the command of the governor.

As a just critic, I must admit that the manoeuvres were commendably executed, though with scarcely that spontaneity one is accustomed to in European troops. However, all things considered, it was a creditable enough exhibition; and for this reason, when the king asked my opinion, I was happily placed in such a position that I could express my approval without being called upon to tell an untruth.

The parade at an end and the troops dismissed, the officer commanding the garrison, a tall dark Frenchman named Gaspard Roche, approached the king. I scanned him closely as he came up the steps, and from that moment took an instinctive dislike to the man. Why I should have done so I cannot tell, but that I did so is beyond doubt; whether or not my aversion was proved to be well founded you will have an opportunity of judging for yourself later on. That he, on his side, did not take very kindly to me was also evident.

Unfortunately this unsympathetic individual was now formally introduced to me, and for this reason it was necessary for me to be civil to him, otherwise I should certainly have declined the honour of his acquaintance. Little did I guess how intimately he was destined to be associated with our fortunes later on. When he had held his conversation with his prince he saluted and withdrew. The king then led me into the palace, where, in his study, he bluntly asked my opinion of his commandant.

'Am I to be candid with you?' I inquired.

'I hope you will be perfectly candid,' he answered. 'I have great faith in your judgment, and I should like to know exactly what you think of him.'

'In that case I have no option but to tell you,' I replied, 'that I don't like the man. There is something about his face that displeases me, though I'm afraid I am illogical enough not to be able to tell you exactly what it is.'

'You surprise me,' said the king gravely. 'The man has been in my service nearly three years now, and I have always found him a faithful servant and a zealous officer. If he has

one failing, he is a trifle too severe with his men. Otherwise, I have no fault at all to urge against him.'

'I am very glad indeed to hear it,' I replied. 'You will do me the justice to remember that I only gave you my opinion about the man when you pressed me. I know nothing either for or against him. I simply judged by the effect his face had upon me—a rather foolish method of determining a man's character when all is said and done, I will admit.'

The king was silent for a moment. When he spoke it was as if he had been carefully considering my last speech in all its lights.

'For my part, I am compelled to disagree with your last remark,' he said. 'In nine cases out of ten the first impression a face makes upon one is the correct one. It is only when one has become accustomed to a countenance that one fails to notice the subtler shades of character reflected upon it. However, you must see more of the general, and perhaps your bad opinion may be dispelled.'

I answered that I hoped that it might, but I did not tell him that no amount of intimacy would ever change my distrust of his officer.

Whether the king had said anything to the man in question I cannot say; but one afternoon a week or so later, I was sitting on the battlements, watching the sunset effects upon the plain below, when I heard footsteps behind me, and on looking round found the person in question coming towards me. As soon as he became aware that I saw him he raised his hand to his helmet and saluted me.

'A lovely evening, my lord,' he said, with soldierly brevity. 'I congratulate you on your taste. It would scarcely be possible to choose a better place from which to observe the glorious sunset effects. Do you mark that long touch of pearl gray upon the hill-top yonder? How beautifully it contrasts with the salmon pink of the sky above!'

I answered in suitable terms, half hoping that he would see I was not anxious for his company and would withdraw again. But it soon became evident that it was with the intention of seeking me that he had ascended to the wall. He approached and took his seat beside me on the stone coping.

'My lord,' he said, after a few polite common-places that deceived neither of us, 'I have a question that I should very much like permission to put to you.'

'What is it?' I asked abruptly, with a sort of uneasy conviction that I knew what his question would be. 'If you will ask it, I will do my best to answer.'

He paused for a moment as if to consider in what manner he could best put it, and having made up his mind said:

'What I wish to know is why your lordship has taken such a prejudice against me?'

Though I half expected that that was what he was going to say, I was so staggered by the way in which he put it that for a moment I could only sit and stare at him.

'I trust, General Roche, I have never given you cause to think I have a prejudice against you?' was all that I could say.

'Perhaps not in your speech, nor in your

behaviour,' he answered. 'I am prepared to say that both have been courtesy itself. Nevertheless, I am convinced, in my own mind, that you have taken a dislike to me. Can you deny it?'

'My dear sir,' I replied, 'I must let you know that I object to being cross-examined in this way. I hold myself responsible to nobody for what I may say or think. And surely, whatever may be my feelings towards you, this action on your part will scarcely better them. I don't think you will ever have reason to complain of my behaviour; pray, do not give me cause to complain of yours.'

'I suppose I must be content with that,' he said. 'But I should like to have understood why your lordship bears me such ill-will.'

'There you are quite mistaken,' I answered. 'I do not entertain the slightest ill-will towards you. It quite depends upon yourself whether I ever shall.'

'And I am to rest tranquil with this meagre assurance?' he asked.

I rose to my feet, as if to terminate the interview.

'General Roche,' I said sternly, 'you adopt a tone with me that I do not like. I have assured you that I have no animus against you. You imply that you doubt the truth of my assertion. After that, I leave you.'

In his turn, he leapt to his feet.

'Mon Dieu,' he cried, 'you treat me like a child.'

'Is that my fault, if you behave like one?' I replied. 'But I cannot stay to discuss the matter any further. I have the honour to wish you a good evening.'

I raised my hat, and walked away, leaving him standing looking after me, the picture of impotent rage. From that day forward, however, I was not again molested by him. He went his way, I went mine, and as we met but seldom, our quarrel bade fair, if left alone, to die a natural death.

#### AFTER A MINE EXPLOSION.

In *Chambers's Journal* for December 1st, 1894, we spoke of the terribly explosive character of the fine dust that lodges in every nook and on every cross timber in many of our coal-mines. We told how the Destroying Angel, with sword of flame and sooty wings, comes tearing through the air-ways of the mines leaving death behind him. Fine coal-dust suspended in the air is a far more dangerous explosive than gunpowder. When once the explosion has been started—usually by the flame from a blasting shot igniting the dust—it travels with terrible rapidity, being constantly fed with fresh dust as it goes, and supplied with fresh air by the ventilating fans.

Formerly the death of the miners who were not killed outright by the force of the explosion was thought to be due to suffocation. After the explosion, which always travels with the air-current, the passages traversed by it are full of what miners call after-damp. This after-damp is the vitiated air left behind by the explosion, and its dangerous character is well

known. Until quite recently the deadliness of the after-damp was thought to be due to its lack of oxygen and the large excess of carbonic acid it contained. In spite of the remarkable experiments of Dr Haldane, which showed that no difference was noticed in breathing air when half the oxygen had been removed and that excess of carbonic acid was not noticeable until it reached three per cent., or one hundred times the normal quantity, and that even air containing ten per cent., although distressing to breathe, was not actually dangerous to life, people, including Dr Haldane himself, still believed that the miners were suffocated from want of oxygen. At the beginning of this year, however, Dr Haldane had a melancholy opportunity of examining the bodies of the unfortunate men killed in the explosion of coal-dust at the Tylorstown Colliery in South Wales; and the results of his investigations have thrown an entirely new light on the causes of death in the mine.

The explosion happened about 5.30 A.M., and was propagated through three pits by the usual whirling rush of exploding coal-dust and air. As it happened, only ninety men were in the mine at the time. Of these, fifty-seven were killed and thirty-three were brought up alive. Dr Haldane, with the assistance of Dr Morris, the medical officer to the colliery, examined all the bodies of the men and the bodies of thirty of the horses. The bodies could be divided into two classes—those killed by actual violence and those who had died from the effects of the after-damp. The latter class contained ninety-one per cent. of the whole number of deaths.

Apart from those actually killed outright by violence, very few of the bodies showed any marks of injury or even burning. Very often the coal-dust on the skin presented the appearance of burning where none actually existed. In nearly every case death had been dealt out by the after-damp. The bodies of the miners presented a most deceptive appearance, nearly all looking as if in a peaceful sleep. The pinkness of their cheeks and of the skin wherever the blood-vessels came near the surface, especially on the palms of the hands, counterfeited health, and was in marked contrast to the usual blue or leaden colour of the dead. This pinkness was so marked that one glance was generally sufficient to determine the cause of death, which was not due in any case to suffocation, but to actual poisoning with carbon monoxide, the gas produced by the incomplete combustion of coal or other similar substance.

This gas, carbon monoxide, is one of the most insidious poisons we possess, and has probably claimed more victims than morphia or prussic acid. When coke, coal, or charcoal burns completely, carbonic acid is produced, but under certain circumstances—incomplete supply of air or very high temperature—carbon monoxide is given off. The former contains two atoms of oxygen to one of carbon, whilst the latter contains only one atom of oxygen to one of carbon. In fact, carbon monoxide is carbon half burnt. Carbonic acid, or carbon dioxide as chemists call it when speaking accurately, exerts no in-

jurious effect on the breathing until it reaches a comparatively high proportion in the air; carbon monoxide, however, has quite a different action. Its affinity for the red colouring matter of the blood is greater than that of oxygen itself. Consequently the blood, or rather the red colouring matter that acts as the carrier of oxygen, will absorb even small proportions of carbon monoxide from the air in preference to oxygen. This small percentage keeps on accumulating, the blood continually filtering off the poisonous gas from the air in the lungs until a stage is reached at which the blood is so occupied with the poison that it is unable to carry sufficient oxygen for the needs of the body, and the man falls in a helpless and semi-paralysed condition. If the unfortunate individual remains a short time longer in the contaminated air, death follows.

The after-effects of the gas are very serious, even if the patient recovers. In addition to depriving the blood of its power of carrying oxygen, the gas seems to exert an action on the nervous system similar to that of strychnine. The smallest attempt at muscular exertion results in tetanic convulsions. For this reason it is most difficult to keep up artificial respiration, which is the only means of clearing the poison out of the blood. If possible the rescued men are given oxygen to breathe instead of air; stimulants and warmth, especially the latter, being a great assistance to their recovery. For some reason as yet unexplained, the shock of the fresh air on bringing the men out of the pit seems particularly dangerous. The writer can confirm the results of Dr Haldane's experiments on breathing air containing carbon monoxide. For some time nothing unusual is observed, then a slight headache, and dizzy, bilious feeling comes on; then follows loss of control over the legs, so that it is impossible to stand up without holding on to something. It is this last effect of carbon monoxide poisoning that makes the after-damp so very dangerous. Many rescue parties have lost their lives through going into the after-damp and being unable to get back. The imprisoned miners have generally lost their lives in the same way.

In connection with this last melancholy fact, the plans of the mines accompanying Dr Haldane's report form a most interesting study. The places where the men worked and where each body was found are marked, the former in black and the latter in red ink. From this it is seen at once that nearly all the men lost their lives in their endeavour to reach the bottom of the shaft. If they had stayed at the 'face' of the coal where they were at work, instead of running into the after-damp hanging about the air-ways in the track of the explosion, they would probably all be alive now. Another important point shown by the plans is that the explosion followed the direct air-current, and was stopped whenever any considerable length of the mine was efficiently watered. The explosion rarely approached the face of the coal or penetrated into the return air-ways. It is clear from this that the miners, after an explosion, should either stop where they are, or, where possible, reach the upcast shaft through

the return air-ways. In many cases the lives of the men have been saved by one of the firemen dissuading them from making for the direct air-ways. In one case the men saved themselves by retiring before the after-damp, and erecting curtains and barriers to prevent it from following them.

In almost all cases of explosions in mines the imprisoned men could have been saved by suitable precautions and a proper line of conduct. Probably the explosions themselves might have been prevented if the air-ways of the mines had been efficiently watered, and the question of enforcing this regulation is engaging the attention of Parliament at the present time. Another important point is that the ventilating fans should be strongly constructed, and so arranged that they can be got to work again as soon as possible after the explosion, so as to clear the mine of after-damp. Dr Haldane suggests that as mice are much more sensitive to carbon monoxide than human beings, a few should be kept in cages in the mines—there are always any number running about loose—for the imprisoned miners or rescue parties to take with them. As soon as the mouse begins to show signs of distress, they will know it is time to retreat. Some test of this kind is absolutely necessary, as the miner's lamp, which shows him the presence of the other dangerous gases—black-damp and fire-damp—gives no indication of the presence of after-damp. In fact miners have been found dead with lamps burning brightly beside them.

## ATTRAY'S WIFE.

### CHAPTER II.

GREEN PLACE was a *lucus a lucendo*. There was nothing green about it except the strip of garden with its shrubs and grass. The house was white, the shingle which lay almost at the very door was white, and there was a quarter of a mile of it ere the marsh-land was reached. It was a sun-blistered, shadeless spot in summer, and in winter it was utterly lone and desolate-looking. The high road to Rye went past Green Place, but it was little used, and entire days often passed without a wheel or a foot stirring on it. Small wonder that Green Place had a bad name, that after the last tenant disappeared it remained empty for more than a year, and that belated passers-by saw strange sights and heard strange sounds there. Every preventive officer who came to Broadmarsh kept his eye on Green Place; but the very smugglers avoided it, for it stood far back from the sea, and was too much of a landmark.

The next day Eustace Hirst arrayed himself in suitable uniform, and called at Green Place. Miss Mountjoy, as she preferred to be called, was in the garden, saw the lieutenant approaching, and welcomed him with a smile which set his heart beating fast. She ushered him into the house and into a large room, which was furnished and decorated in a style which, according to the local standard, might be accounted almost sumptuous, and retired, saying that she would tell her mother he was here.

She re-entered presently with a woman who

at once inspired the young lieutenant with something akin to awe, and he was of an age and a calling which are not easily awed. She was tall above the average of women, firmly yet gracefully built, and her figure was set off to the fullest advantage by the well-fitting dress of deep mourning which draped it. Her face was of the strong, handsome type—strongly featured, strongly-lined, with strong black brows above a pair of black eyes which seemed to look straight into the hearts of persons and things. Her hair was gray and prettily waved.

But when she spoke in a low-pitched, gently-modulated voice, with the burr of her accent betraying her Northumbrian origin, there spoke the refined lady. 'And this woman's husband,' thought the lieutenant, as he rose to meet her, 'is a smuggler and a triple murderer.'

'You have come'—? she said inquiringly.

'To pay my respects, madam, and to welcome you as a neighbour,' replied the young officer.

'You are very kind. I came here to be out of the way of neighbours.'

An ungracious speech most graciously spoken.

'You will not be troubled here, madam,' said Eustace. 'Mr Texter, your humble servant, and—that is all.'

'You are in the Preventive Service?'

'Alas, yes, madam.'

'Why "alas"? It is a fine service—plenty of action, plenty of excitement.'

'Of a distasteful kind. You are everybody's enemy: you hold your life in your hand, and there is no honour and glory in it. For a young man it is a hateful service.'

'But there are prizes?'

'Now and then—yes,' replied her visitor, the placard about Attray staring him in his mind's eye.

'If you could, for instance, catch William Attray of Alnmouth, he would be a prize.'

'Indeed he would, madam. Oh, I beg your pardon.'

'Don't do that. I don't want to see him. I bear his name—that is all.'

'Would you give him up, madam?'

'Certainly. He gave me up long since. Catch him if you can, and don't consider his wife in the matter.'

'Excuse me, but have you a picture of him?'

'Not I! God forbid! If I cared for him sufficiently to keep a picture of him, why should I have come to this dead corner of the world under an assumed name? For myself, I don't mind so much. I am an old woman, and my life is past. But my poor Eleanor here'—

She laid her hand affectionately on the girl's arm as she spoke, and something like a tear dimmed her bright eyes.

There was a light tap at the outer door at this point. Eleanor hurried out of the room, and presently returned, saying that Mr Texter was without and would like to see Mrs Mountjoy.

'Let him come in,' said that lady carelessly. 'I suppose he wants a subscription for something.'



So Mr Texter walked in—a parson of too common a type at the time—a coarse, open-faced, jowly man, shabbily dressed, and dirty; one, in fact, who had sunk with his surroundings, and who had ceased to be ashamed of so doing. Living, as he did, in a breezy, hearty world of smuggling and storm-braving and shot-exchanging men, his manner was intended to be appropriate, and innocent people were taken in by it, and spoke of him as a regular sailors' sky pilot and no mistake, not a bit like your wishy-washy young chaps from the 'shires.

He came in airily and jauntily, but when he saw the lieutenant there was a perceptible droop in his manner. He checked his off-hand salutation, and replaced it by one of more formal cut. Eustace rose, and took his leave as the parson entered. Eleanor followed him.

'I dare say you thought it strange that my mother should have made no allusion to your saving my life yesterday, Mr Hirst,' she said, as they walked to the garden gate; 'but I said nothing about it. It would only make her more unhappy than she is to think that I was so miserable as to be driven to such an act. What do you think of her?'

'I think she is the most striking woman I have ever seen,' replied Eustace.

'You would hardly think that she was bowed beneath a sorrow greater than even most men could bear?'

'Indeed, no; and yet there is something about her which speaks of trouble. Parson Texter seems pretty much at home.'

'A great deal too much. He's after me, I think, and he has half won mother round.'

'But you, Miss Attray—'

'Not that name, for God's sake! As for me marry Parson Texter! No! I may be the daughter of a—of you know what, but before I would accept him I would get out of life in some way which even you could not prevent.'

'I am glad to hear that—I mean, your feeling towards the parson.'

'You don't like him?'

'I don't.'

'Why not?'

'I hardly know. I cannot say yet, but I am watching him.'

'I see what you mean. You think he is in league with the smugglers. Where was he before he came here?'

'I don't know. Somewhere in the north, I think, but I will try and find out if it will please you.'

'Thank you, do not trouble,' said the girl listlessly. 'Now I must go in. Good-morning, Mr Hirst, and thank you.'

They bowed and parted, but the lieutenant, looking back after he had gone a few paces, was overjoyed to see that Eleanor was in the porch looking after him, so he saluted. She replied with a wave of the hand, and the happiest man in the Marsh that day was Eustace Hirst.

Duty occupied the lieutenant until dusk, when he was at liberty to turn in and think over the new world which had been opened to him by the formation of the acquaintance with the Mountjoys. Texter occupied the chief place

in his thoughts—after Eleanor, of course. When he had told the girl that he had not made up his mind about the parson, no question about the association of the reverend gentleman with the contraband trade was in his mind, simply because he knew very well the parson to be, like every parson for miles around, hand in glove with the smugglers. This was no secret, and the fact that it was none had been the cause of estrangement between them. No. There was something deeper than this, something which accounted for the evidently familiar footing upon which the parson stood with Mrs Mountjoy, something which had led that stately and reserved lady at anyrate not to resent his paying his addresses to her daughter when that daughter might, with her beauty and her grace, command a very different husband from a snuffy, boosy Marsh-land parson.

His thoughts turned to Eleanor's attempted suicide, attempted, she had told him, because she was weary of life, and because the life to which she would have gone, had he not prevented her, might have been better and could not have been worse than that which she was leading.

Why was her present life so miserable?

Not because she was the daughter of a murderer, for both she and her mother had avowed this fact without any apparent consciousness that any stigma clung to them, although they did choose to live under an assumed name. Not because her life with her mother was unhappy, for Mrs Mountjoy exhibited the greatest tenderness towards her.

In the lieutenant's mind, therefore, Eleanor's unhappiness could only be on account of Mr Texter's courtship and its favourable acknowledgment by her mother.

Could it be possible, thought the young man, that Mrs Mountjoy was under any obligation to the parson?

So he pondered and wondered until, wearied with a long vigil, his pipe tumbled from his mouth, and he fell fast asleep.

He was called at ten o'clock by the quartermaster for the rounds. This was no mere formality, for the preventive posts extended over a long line of coast, and had severally to be visited. Moreover, the runners were keen enough to seize every opportunity, and were full of ruses and dodges which demanded the exercise of constant watchfulness on the part of the Preventive men. However, all was well; the lieutenant dismissed the patrol and, being now thoroughly awakened, directed his steps almost mechanically towards Green Place.

All there was dark and silent, and Eustace had to content himself with the usual lover's promenade outside, wondering which of the many upper windows marked the shrine of his goddess.

Suddenly he became aware that he was not alone. Clearly cut against the line of light which marked the horizon where a moon was rising behind great banks of clouds, he saw the figure of the parson, strolling methodically up and down as if keeping watch and ward.

The parson saw him, for he came towards him.

'Hullo, lieutenant; on watch, eh?' said he cheerily, and apparently not in the least put out at finding his rival on the ground.

'Yes,' replied Eustace; 'and you, ditto, eh?'

'Well—um, yes.'

Then there was a pause. The parson broke it:

'Look here, Hirst. We may as well talk here and now as at any other place and time,' he said.

'I don't want to talk. I didn't come to talk,' replied the young officer curtly.

'Nor did I. But I've been wanting to talk to you, and I've been waiting for an opportunity.'

'Fire away, then!'

'If you married Miss Mountjoy'—began the parson.

'Good heavens, man, what are you talking about?' interrupted Hirst; 'why, I've only known her a couple of days.'

'If you married Miss Mountjoy,' continued the parson, without heeding the interruption, 'I suppose you know what sort of a connection you would be forming?'

'But who the devil said I was going to marry Miss Mountjoy?' said the lieutenant angrily.

'I don't know. I've never heard any one say so,' replied the parson quite calmly; 'I'm only putting a supposition.'

'I hate suppositions. My dealings are with facts.'

'Very well, then. It's a fact that you're very fond of Miss Mountjoy, although you have only known her a couple of days, and that she is not unkind to you.'

'Really I don't know what business this is of yours,' said Eustace, now thoroughly roused.

'If you weren't what you are, I should be disposed to kick you.'

'That's simply bullying,' said the parson quietly, but edging off a pace or two.

'Come to the point, man, if you can,' said Eustace.

'That's what I'm trying to do, but you're so peppery. If—grant me this "if"—if you make love to Eleanor Mountjoy, perhaps you don't know that you're making love to Eleanor Attray, daughter of Bill Attray of Alnmouth, the murderer of three men of your own service?'

'I am quite aware who she is,' said the lieutenant.

The parson whistled.

'And your fond parents would bless your union with the daughter of such a man, eh?'

'Confound you! Let my fond parents be.'

'I will. Let me indulge in another little supposition. Suppose you married her, you couldn't very well give up her father as a murderer, could you?'

'But, granting your silly supposition, what chance have I of giving up Bill Attray?'

'If the chance was put in your way, you would be bound to take it, wouldn't you?'

'Yes, of course.'

'It would be a grand thing for you. Five hundred pounds in your pocket—special *Gazette*—promotion—ball of fortune at your feet.'

'I suppose you mean'—said Eustace.

'Don't let us have suppositions,' laughed the parson. 'This is what I mean. I am in love with Eleanor Attray, alias Mountjoy. If she accepts me, I bind myself not to say what I know, or what I think I know, for I am not yet sure. If she refuses me, I shall know what to do.'

'You're a pretty parson, you are!' sneered Eustace. 'Look here; I've had enough of this. I don't want anything more to do with you. I wouldn't believe your information on oath, and I'm going to mind my own business. Good-night.'

So saying, he turned on his heel, and walked rapidly towards his quarters; but, turning his head back for a moment, he fancied he saw the parson's figure against the sky-line cutting a caper expressive of exuberant delight.

### SOME LANDLADIES OF FICTION.

WE have, most of us, at some period or other of our lives, taken up a temporary abode in lodgings, and have thus become acquainted with the landlady of real life, whom we have probably found to differ somewhat from her conventional portrait. In the pages of fiction she was, more often than not, forbidding of aspect and grasping of disposition, with many of the unamiable traits of the shark. She was inexorable as to the punctual settlement of her little bill—which, however, somehow always managed to attain very considerable dimensions. She was often the possessor of a cat, with a fine appetite for cold mutton, and a nice taste in tea. From an interview with her, the lodger retreated discomfited, content in the future to put up with any exaction, if only he might be left at peace. She was altogether a sufficiently terrible person, even though her fury was at times comic enough. Not that all authors have drawn the landlady in such dark colours; but, generally speaking, one rises from the perusal of the novelists' pages with an unfavourable impression of the class; and if we include under the heading landlady the hostess of an inn, we find asperity of temper a very prominent failing in that walk of life also. Thus, Meg Dods forms a pendant to Mrs Raddle or Mrs MacStinger. From personal contact, however, we come to realise that the landlady is, as a rule, neither better nor worse than her neighbours. Occasionally she possesses much of the milk of human kindness. Not unfrequently she has played an important, though unconscious part in the lives of men of letters. If no man is a hero to his valet, the same might perhaps be said of the relation of an artist or author to his landlady. But to a touch of nature she responds at once. Thus, Mrs Angel, the landlady of the marvellous boy Chatterton, is associated with the sad story of his last days in Brooke Street, Holborn. Knowing that he had eaten nothing for three days, she begged him, on the 24th of August 1770, to share her dinner. But his proud spirit took offence at words which seemed to hint that he was in want, and her kindness did not avail to avert his end.

Goldsmith, again, experienced much kindness

from Mrs Fleming, his Islington landlady; and we are assured that her bills are again and again significantly marked £0, 0s. 0d. His arrest for debt may perhaps, therefore, be laid at the door of some other landlady, or Mrs Fleming's long-suffering patience may at length have become exhausted: at any rate, we find the poet in his need sending for Dr Johnson, whose sympathy, as usual, took a practical form. 'I perceived,' says the Doctor, 'that he had already changed my guinea, and got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork in the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated.' Thus it came about that Johnson sold the book—*The Vicar of Wakefield*—which was to add such lustre to Goldsmith's name, to Francis Newbury, the publisher, for the sum of £60. Mrs Piozzi tells us that when Johnson came back with the money, the poet 'called the woman of the house directly to partake of punch, and pass their time in merriment.' Boswell, however, quotes this statement as 'an extreme inaccuracy.'

But, to turn to the characters of fiction. Dickens has perhaps given us more examples of the landlady than any other author. Every reader of *Pickwick* remembers that little fierce woman, Mrs Raddle of Lant Street, Borough, who was of opinion that if Bob Sawyer could afford to give a party, he ought to be able to afford to pay her little bill. It is in vain that he tells her he has been disappointed in the city. Mr Benjamin Allen's attempt to pour oil on the troubled waters, by addressing her as 'my good soul,' only provokes her to retort: 'Have the goodness to keep your oberwashuns to yourself.'

Under these circumstances, Mrs Raddle's wrath at the supper-party cannot fairly be ascribed to pure malevolence. Indeed, one has a sort of sympathy with the poor lady, 'having her house turned out of window, and noise enough made to bring the fire-engines here at two o'clock in the morning,' as she remarked. The supineness of her spouse, who regretted that his strength was not equal to that of a dozen men, was another irritating factor in the situation. One can hardly wonder, therefore, that the guests of the evening were treated with scant ceremony as 'a parcel of young cutters and carvers of live people's bodies,' or that Mr Pickwick was included in this terrible indictment. That amiable philosopher, in fact, was told that he was 'worse than any of 'em,' and old enough to be Bob Sawyer's grandfather.

The landlady of Captain Cuttle is a ter-magant of a similar type, and without so much justification for her outbursts. She, however, was no doubt presuming on the Captain's well-known kindness of heart. There in Brig Place, on the brink of the little canal near the India Docks, that unfortunate mariner lived in constant trepidation. Here it was that Walter one day—washing-day, of all others—called to see him, and was told by the Captain to 'Stand by and knock agen—hard.' Before he could enter, however, he had to surmount the 'little wooden fortification extending across the doorway, and put there to prevent the little

MacStingers, in their moments of recreation, from tumbling down the steps.' The landlady thereupon asks an imaginary audience whether she is to be broken in upon by 'raff,' and opines that a boy who could knock her door down could get over that little obstruction. From which we gather that her temper was none of the sweetest, and I can sympathise with the Captain, who never owed her a penny, in his remark that 'she was a vixen at times.' When Walter advised him to go elsewhere, he replies: 'Dursn't do it, Wal'r—she'd find me out wherever I went.' Later on, it will be remembered, the Captain, on one of his rounds, meets the 'awful demonstration, headed by that determined woman, Mrs MacStinger, who, preserving a countenance of inexorable resolution, and wearing, conspicuously attached to her obdurate bosom, a stupendous watch and appendages—the property of Bunsby—conducted under her arm no other than that sagacious mariner. Although on this occasion Mrs MacStinger vowed she bore no malice, but hoped to go to the altar in another spirit, Captain Cuttle (having dearly bought his experience) in vain advises Bunsby of the *Cautious Clara*, in nautical phraseology, to 'sheer off.'

Mrs Bardell, on the other hand, is of a much gentler disposition; and in spite of the breach of promise action, much that is good can be conscientiously said of her. She was a comely woman, of bustling manners and agreeable appearance, with—that most excellent thing in a landlady—'a natural genius for cooking, improved by study and long practice, into an exquisite talent.' We know that in her house in Goswell Street Mr Pickwick's will was law; and we expect he had very little to grumble at in his apartments, which, though on a limited scale, were very neat and comfortable. Beside these advantages there were no children, no servants, no fowls. If she had a fault, therefore, it was that of being too easily led away by her feelings.

Humour and pathos are happily blended in the story of Mrs Lirriper, the genial landlady of No. 81 Norfolk Street, Strand, who did not advertise in *Bradshaw*, like her rival, Miss Wozenham, lower down on the other side of the way. Of the ways of servant girls no one had more experience: they 'are your first trial after fixtures,' and in her opinion, were more trying even than the 'wandering Christians,' as she styled the individuals who amused themselves by going over apartments they had no intention of taking. What life-like sketches she gives us of the willing Sophy, always smiling with a black face, and of the violent Caroline Moxey! Sophy, indeed, was the cause of a good lodger giving warning—for though he had arrived at the point of admitting that the black is a man and a brother, it was only in a natural form, 'and when it can't be got off.' 'I took a deal of black into me, ma'am, when I was a small child,' poor Sophy explains, 'and I think it must be that it works out.' Caroline Moxey's temper was the cause of a deal of unpleasantness, particularly on the occasion of her letting down her hair, and rushing up-stairs to attack the unfortunate lodgers—a newly

married couple. Mrs Lirriper had a soft spot in her heart for her faithful lodger, Major Jackman, who was not to be outdone by her in his love for little Jemmy, the trust committed to them by the dying Mrs Edson. How forgiving, too, was her conduct to Miss Wozenham when that rival had fallen on evil days and was being sold up—the systematic underbidding and the enticing away of the servant being buried in oblivion.

Mrs Todgers, the proprietrix of the commercial boarding-house near the Monument, was a rather 'bony and hard-featured lady, with a row of curls in front of her head shaped like little barrels of beer, and on the top of it something made of net—you couldn't call it a cap exactly—which looked like a black cobweb.' We have it from her own lips, that presiding over such an establishment makes sad havoc with the features. 'The gravy alone,' as she informed Miss Pecksniff, 'is enough to add twenty years to one's age.' In her opinion, there was no such passion in human nature as the passion for gravy among commercial gentlemen. Nevertheless, she owned to feelings of a tender nature for Mr Pecksniff—unworthy though he was—and befriended his daughter Mercy after her unfortunate marriage with Jonas Chuzzlewit.

Landladies abound in the pages of Thackeray, and he treats them with a mixture of humour and pathos all his own. To be forced to leave a fine house, and subside into lodgings, or to have seen better days, and subsist by letting them, are changes of fortune which furnish many illustrations for his text, 'vanitas vanitatum.' Among his lesser characters we have Mrs Creed in *Pendennis*, who, in addition to being pew-opener, was landlady of Miss Fotheringay, the daughter of Captain Costigan. According to her own account, she watched over that young lady's doings with the vigilance of a Cerberus rather than an ordinary chaperon. Thus it was that Doctor Portman and the Major, anxious as they were to win Pen from his infatuation for the fair actress, could find nothing to object to in her behaviour. 'Whenever he came,' Mrs Creed informed them, 'she always have me or one of the children with her. And Mrs Creed, marm, says she, if you please, marm, you'll on no account leave the room when that young gentleman's here. And many's the time I've seen him a-lookin' as if he wished I was away, poor young man.' From the same novel we have Madame Frisby, the dressmaker, who lets apartments to Mr Smirke, the curate, and encourages his affection for the widow, Helen Pendennis. No one in all Clavering, we are told, read so many novels, from which, doubtless, her sentimental views of life were mainly derived. The history of Mr and Mrs Sedley after the crash is associated with their landlady, Mrs Clapp, at Brompton. The old lady, we are told, was occupied and amused with the doings of the Irish maid, Betty Flanagan, 'her bonnets, her ribbons, her sauciness, her idleness, her reckless prodigality of kitchen candles, her consumption of tea and sugar, and so forth,' almost as much as she had been with the doings of her own household in former days. Mrs Sedley was always a great person for her landlady when she

descended and passed many hours with her in the basement or ornamental kitchen. But this was in comparatively halcyon days. The question of rent was even looming in the background, and gradually the pleasant intercourse between the landlady and lodger ceased. Mrs Clapp, in her nether realm, 'grumbles in secret to her husband about the rent, and urges the good fellow to rebel against his old friend and patron and present lodger.' Finally, one day Jos's carriage arrives and carries off old Sedley and his daughter to return no more. Amelia had always been kind, and when she was going away, the landlady bitterly reproached herself for ever having used a rough expression to her. There was genuine regret for their departure. 'They would never have such lodgers again, that was clear,' and the author tells us that after-life proved the truth of this melancholy prophecy, and that Mrs Clapp revenged herself for the deterioration of mankind by levying the most savage contributions upon the tea-caddies and legs of mutton of her locataires. 'Most of them scolded and grumbled, some of them did not pay, none of them stayed.' Then we have Mrs James Gann, in *A Shabby Genteel Story*, who lets lodgings at Margate; Mrs Brandon, the 'little sister,' in the *Adventures of Philip*; and Mrs Ridley, in the *Newcomes*, of whom, did space permit, much might be said. Thackeray's finest portrait in the way of landladies, however, is that of Miss Honeyman, the aunt of Clive Newcome. A woman of a thousand virtues, cheerful, frugal, honest, laborious, charitable—such is the character of the little, brisk old lady in Steyne Gardens, whose superior manners and prosperity won her the title of Duchess from the neighbouring tradespeople. We can imagine her to ourselves with her 'large cap, bristling with ribbons, with her best chestnut front, and her best black silk gown and gold watch,' as she stands prepared for the interview with Lady Anne Newcome. Mine hostess of the inn has been not infrequently portrayed in poetry and prose from the days of Mistress Nell of the Boar's Head onwards.

Suffice it in conclusion to give one or two examples of the sisterhood drawn from the pages of Sir Walter Scott. What a wonderful picture is that of the wild inn at Aberfoyle, and of its no less wild landlady, Jean MacAlpine, on the night when Frank Osbaldistone and the others arrive there. Reluctant to receive her guests, she appears before them, a pale and thin figure, with a soiled and ragged dress, a lighted piece of split fir blazing in her hand. With her black hair in uncombed elf-locks, she looked, indeed, like a witch disturbed in the midst of her unlawful rites. She had little opinion of the idle English loons that went about the country 'under the cloud of night and disturbing honest, peaceable gentlemen that are drinking their drap drink at the fireside.' Alternately, however, after the stormy interlude of the fight between the Bailie and the Highlander, she consents to prepare a savoury mess of venison collops for the tired and hungry travellers. As a contrast to Jean MacAlpine, we have the landlady of the small and comfortable inn at Kippeltringan,



Mrs MacCandlish, who so well knew the reception to which each of her customers was entitled. With unflinching tact

To every guest the appropriate speech was made,  
And every duty with distinction paid,  
Respectful, easy, pleasant, or polite,  
'Your honour's servant! Mister Smith, good-night.'

Such we find her on that cold and stormy night in November when she receives Colonel Manning seventeen years after the disappearance of little Harry Bertram. Most elaborate of all is the description of that old-world landlady, Meg Dods, who ruled with the despotism of Queen Bess herself. We can picture her with long, skinny hands, and loud voice, as she ordered about not only men and maid-servants, but her guests themselves—members perchance of the Killnaketty Hunt or ancient brethren of the angle from Edinburgh. The members of this hunt, it will be remembered, were treated with some indulgence. 'A set of honest men they were,' Meg said; 'had their song and their joke, and what for no?'

### THE MARKED HALF-SOVEREIGN.

By J. S. FLETCHER.

It was a dull, damp, December afternoon, and the trees and hedgerows by which I walked were dank and wet with the clinging vapours that rose from the sodden fields beyond. A slight rain had begun to fall, and my clothes—unprotected by umbrella or mackintosh—already felt not a little damp. It would have suited my mood to go walking on, no matter in what direction; but I reflected that to get wet through might produce serious results in the way of illness; and in my then position, sickness of any sort was a luxury that I could not possibly afford. So I turned and went back to my lodgings, at the same time dreading to go there lest my landlady should again ask me to discharge my debt to her. I was in bad case: I had gone to Hillford in order to join a theatrical company then performing there, and had been stranded at the end of the first week by the failure of the manager. We had played to poor houses all the week, and the manager looked obviously worried; and I think none of us were surprised when there was no 'treasury' on the Saturday morning. My fellow-actors and actresses melted away somewhere and somehow; as for me, I stayed on, hoping that something would turn up. The truth was, I was on my beam-ends so far as money was concerned, and I saw no way of escape. But, being stranded, I tried to make the best of things by endeavouring to find employment. I wanted to pay my landlady—in fact, I couldn't leave the town until I had done so. But, try as I would, I had no success; and now it was the Friday of the second week, and there I was, walking along the country road, with just sixpence and some coppers in my pocket, a blank helplessness before me.

I turned into my lodgings with a sort of

callous despair. I expected to see Mrs Smith in the passage, with her bill extended to me. But instead of Mrs Smith I met her maid-of-all-work, who at sight of me immediately disappeared into the kitchen regions, to return presently with a letter held gingerly between her finger and thumb.

'Please, sir,' said she, 'this 'ere come by the afternoon post, and missus says will you please to give me the penny that she paid for it?'

I took the letter from the girl's hand, and looked at the address. A sudden thrill of surprise and hope shot through me—the letter was from my Aunt Maria, with whom and her husband, Uncle Robert, I had been at variance for some time. They—good, honest folk—had wanted me to go in for commerce, in which Uncle Robert had made a fortune: I had wished to satisfy my absorbing passion for the stage. Now, they were the only relations I had in the world, and they had not only brought me up, but also educated me at their own expense; and it was a matter of deep surprise to them, as of great pain to me, that we could not agree as to my future. But I was bound, being young and headstrong, to have my own way—and so there I was, practically penniless, with Aunt Maria's letter in my hand.

I tore open the envelope, and rapidly read the enclosure. My Uncle Robert was ill—so ill that there was next to no chance of his recovery. As soon as he had learnt that his decease was imminent, he had expressed a strong wish to see me. Would I go to him at once? He might linger a few days, but I must lose no time.

I glanced at the date, and then at the envelope, which had been readdressed to me twice. Alas! the letter was written on Monday, and it was then Friday. But I would go—poor old Uncle Robert! he had always been good to me, even though he had never understood me. It might be too late, but even then I might be of use to Aunt Maria. Yes—I would go, and at once! As I started to my feet, I suddenly remembered that Southchester, where Uncle Robert and Aunt Maria lived, was just a hundred miles away, and that I had only tenpence in all the world. What was I to do? I had pawned my watch and all the clothing that I could spare a week earlier—there was literally nothing left to me on which I could raise money. Would Mrs Smith lend me ten shillings? I put the thought aside at once—why, I owed the poor woman three times as much already! Then what was I to do? Was there no one to whom I could apply for help? The express left Hillford for Southchester at seven o'clock, and it was now within a few minutes of six—I had an hour wherein to raise ten shillings. How could it be done?

I suddenly bethought myself of a young gentleman with whom I had struck up a sort of random acquaintance during the week of our

performance at the theatre—a bright, companionable fellow who seemed to like me. We had met casually in the billiard-room of the 'White Hart,' and had somehow engaged in conversation. I would go round to the billiard-room at once—he was usually there about six o'clock, enjoying a game before going home for the evening. Comparative strangers that we were, I felt sure he would lend me half-a-sovereign when I explained my position to him. So I seized my hat and departed. In the passage Mrs Smith confronted me.

'Good-evening, Mrs Smith!' I cried, professing to be in a desperate hurry. 'I can't stop to talk just now—I've just received a most important letter.'

Mrs Smith sighed, and looked at me doubtfully.

'I hope it contained them remittances that you was a-speakin' of, Mr Howard,' said she. 'Cause'—

'All right, Mrs Smith. Don't stop me now—there's a good soul—your bill shall be discharged, I promise you,' I answered as I fled down the steps into the street. I smiled grimly to myself as I walked away, for I felt that it was highly problematical as to when my liability to my landlady would be discharged. But a ray of hope came with the thought of Aunt Maria, and I ran on to the 'White Hart,' hoping to find young Jones, and borrow from him the wherewithal to take me to Southchester at once.

There were several people in the billiard-room when I entered and looked eagerly round for young Jones. At one table two townsmen were playing a friendly game before going home for the evening; at the other a young midshipman, evidently having a holiday ashore, was hugely enjoying himself, and delighting the onlookers by the happy-go-lucky character of his play. Three or four men sat about, smoking and watching, but I saw no sign of the man I wanted. I went up to the head marker, and asked if Mr Jones had been in. The man answered in the negative: he had not seen Mr Jones at all that day. He called across the room to his assistant at the other table, repeating my question. A man seated near the fire turned round, and addressing me, said that he had seen Jones that morning on his way to Manchester for two or three days.

I nodded to my informant, and sat down, feeling inexpressibly disappointed. It had been my last resource—my plans had failed. Already it was drawing near half-past six—I had only half-an-hour in which to raise the money that was absolutely necessary if I meant travelling to Southchester that evening. And yet, what could I do?—I knew no one—I had nothing whereon money could be raised—every channel of assistance seemed closed to me. Visions of travelling without ticket, hiding myself under the seat of a carriage, throwing myself on the mercies of the railway company, flashed across me, and were rejected. I sat there, miserable, helpless, a feeling of dull despair at my heart. The midshipman made a wild shot, and scored, amidst general laughter. He himself laughed, too, and called to the marker to order a drink for

himself and his opponent. He pulled out a handful of loose coins, and threw a half-crown on the table. How greedily my eyes watched his hand! I saw the gleam of gold and silver, and coveted his wealth. If only—

He was putting his handful of money carelessly back into his pocket. His opponent was chaffing him about his last stroke, and he was laughing gaily, all unaware of anything but his amusement. But I, watching his hand and the money it grasped, saw half-a-sovereign slip from his fingers, and drop to the floor. The rug was thick—the little coin made no noise as it fell. It rolled a foot or two, and then settled close to my chair; and before I thought what I was doing, I had put my foot over it.

The players went on with their game—it was evident that the midshipman knew nothing of the coin that he had lost. He continued to laugh and jest—his light-heartedness jarred upon me. As for my mind, it was in a whirl of conflicting emotions. There, beneath my feet, lay the means that I wanted. With that half-sovereign I could travel to Southchester, and perhaps arrive there in time to see my uncle alive. But—it was not mine! It was my duty to pick it up, and give it back to its owner there and then. And yet—would he miss it? I thought of all the other coins that I had seen in his hand—what did a paltry half-sovereign matter to him? Now to me—

The players were at the other end of the table, their attention was absorbed in the play of one of them, nobody was looking in my direction. I stooped and picked up the coin. Within the moment I was in the street, walking quickly in the direction of the railway station. I breathed hard—I was a thief—just as black a thief as plenty of those locked up in the county gaol. I half expected to feel a hand on my shoulder at every step and a stern voice charging me with my crime. But I went on, knowing that all was safe, and that detection was impossible. Under a gas-lamp I stopped and looked at the coin. It was a half-sovereign—yes—and on the face there was a triangular mark, evidently stamped there by a chisel. That rather frightened me—supposing the midshipman missed his money and remembered the mark upon it, might I not be traced by it? I hurried on, wanting to get out of the town. Turning down a dismal street that led towards the station, the sight of a pawnbroker's shop gave me another idea. Of course I must pay the midshipman back. Aunt Maria would find me in ready money—I knew that—and I must return to Hillford and find the boy out, and give him the ten shillings that I had stolen from him. I felt that I should like to give him his own half-sovereign too. The three brass balls suggested something to me. I hurried inside the frowsy pledge office and confronted the man behind the counter.

'Look here,' said I, laying the marked half-sovereign before him, 'will you lend me ten shillings on that?'

He picked up the coin and looked at it and me suspiciously.

'Why,' he said, 'this 'ere is ten shillings, isn't it? What d'yer mean?'

'I mean what I say,' I retorted. 'That's a

coin which I don't want to lose, and it's the last I have. Give me ten shillings for it, and let me redeem it later on. Come, man, it's always worth ten shillings, isn't it?' The fellow looked at me wonderingly. He bit the coin with his big teeth, and held it up to the gas-jet to examine it more closely.

'Give yer nine bob on it,' he said.

I reflected. The fare to Southchester was eight-and-fourpence—I had tenpence of my own.

'All right,' I said. 'And mind you take care of the coin—I shall know it again from any other—it's got a secret mark on it.'

He made out a ticket, and handed it and the nine shillings over. He still stared suspiciously at me, but I ran off into the street and on to the station. Within five minutes I was rattling away in the express towards Southchester.

It was an eventful week that followed. I was in time to see my uncle before he died, and to find that the dear old fellow had cherished no ill thought of me for taking my own way. He told me, almost with his last breath, that he had left me 'a little matter,' and that I was to be good to Aunt Maria. But I had little chance, glad as I should have been to take it, to fulfil my promise to him in this respect; for my poor aunt, who had been deeply attached to her husband, never got over his death, and she died and was buried within the week. They had no children of their own, and so I came in for the whole of their little fortune. Thus, just seven days after I left Hillford with the proceeds of the stolen half-sovereign, I found myself master of five hundred pounds a year.

I had many things to do, and much business to transact, but on the earliest possible day I travelled to Hillford, intent on personally discharging the debt I had contracted with Mrs Smith, and restoring to the midshipman the money I had robbed him of. Mrs Smith was surprised to see me; she had given me up as 'a bad job' she candidly remarked, but she was delighted to receive her money, and showered blessings and good wishes on my head as I left her door. The midshipman, however, I could not find—nobody seemed to know anything of him. The marker at the White Hart was certain that he was not a resident or native of the town, but simply a traveller or passer-by. I tried hard to come across some trace of him, and failed. But I went to the pawn-shop and redeemed the half-sovereign; and when I got back to Southchester I locked it up, intending to keep it in case chance ever brought the midshipman and me together again.

I was now provided for, and I gave up all thought of the dramatic profession as a career. Instead, I turned my attention to the cultivation of roses—a hobby which had formerly had much attraction for my uncle Robert. In time I married. My life was quiet, uneventful, and happy. I had my books, my rose-garden, and my pipe, and if I spent my life somewhat lazily, at least I did no harm. But some of my townsmen felt that I ought to devote a little leisure to the affairs of the town, and so they made me a councillor and procured my appointment as a borough magistrate. After that I began to be busy in a new way.

It was, I think, just ten years after my uncle's death that I went down to the town-hall one summer morning to take my seat on the bench. It was the holiday season, and I was the only magistrate present. The clerk leaned over to me and whispered that there were only two or three cases to dispose of, and that only one was of any consequence. They would take that first—and therewith the constables put into the dock a young man in naval uniform who looked very much ashamed of himself. I glanced carelessly at him at first, then more closely, and suddenly I recognised him as the midshipman! My brain was all in a whirl at that, but I knew that he did not recognise me, so I composed myself and listened to the evidence. It appeared that he was now second mate on a liner, and was taking a holiday at a neighbouring town. He had come over to Southchester, had taken too much to drink, and got into a brawl with the police, who had promptly locked him up. He denied nothing of this, but on the contrary, apologised for his misbehaviour, and expressed his deep regret. He was, he said, very foolish at times, and lost his head. I ordered him to pay a fine of ten shillings and the costs—at which a somewhat curious expression came over his face. I sent word round to the charge office to detain him awhile, and then I settled the other cases, and went to the magistrate's room. The officer who took the fines was waiting me there. 'That young man has no money on him, sir,' said he. 'He thinks he must have spent or lost it all last night; but he says that if you'll let him walk over to Peterborough, where his friends are, he'll send the money at once.'

'Bring him here,' I said. 'I'll speak to him myself.'

When he came, I shut the door and bade him take a chair.

'So you've no money?' I said.

'No,' he answered, looking very uncomfortable.

'You see I got rather excited last night and—'

'Do you remember me?' I asked, interrupting him. 'Look well at me.'

He stared at me in blank surprise.

'No, sir!' he said. 'Indeed I don't—I never saw you before that I know of.'

'Do you remember playing billiards at the White Hart at Hillford, ten years ago—one December evening?' I asked.

'Yes,' he said. 'Of course, I do. I had gone over there to see an old school friend, and I dropped into the White Hart while waiting for a train. Were you?'

'I was there,' I answered. 'And I stole half-a-sovereign from you.'

He stared at me in still greater surprise.

'You—stole—half-a-sovereign from me!' he said. 'I don't know what you mean.'

Then I told him all, as I have set it down here. When I recalled the mark on the coin he remembered it.

'And now,' I said, 'I'm at your mercy. But if you won't prosecute me, I'll pay your fine and costs, and you shall have lunch with me, and I'll show you the half-sovereign. What do you say?'

'Agreed!' said he, laughing. 'Certainly agreed!'

'But there's one more condition,' said I, 'and that is that you let me keep the marked half-sovereign.'

So I still have it, reposing in a little glass case on my study mantelpiece—a reminiscence of my only exploit as a thief.

#### SHEEP-SHEARING IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

Most of our readers would probably think that to shear, say, twenty or thirty sheep, would be as much as the most skilful and industrious shearer could do in a long day's work. They may, therefore, be interested to know what vastly greater numbers are expected to pass through the deft hands of a capable craftsman in the pastoral regions of the great sheep-keeping colony of New South Wales. Our notes have been collected on the spot.

The number of sheep a man can shear in a day of eight and a half hours is governed by several circumstances over and above the shearer's expertness, depending mainly on the class of sheep and the nature of the country over which the sheep have pastured.

Of all breeds of sheep merinos are the most difficult to shear. In the first place, they are very 'throaty'—that is, the skin covering the neck lies in large, loose folds, so that manipulation with the shears is at best tedious and troublesome. Then, again, they possess what is technically known as the 'points' of the breed—they are woolled to the tip of the nose and down the legs to the hoofs; it is these so-called 'points' that take up time.

Sheep grazing over pastures where burs, grass seeds, twigs &c. are numerous, or over coarse, sandy country, pick up in their fleece quantities of foreign matter that blunt the shears during the process of shearing. It will at once be seen that this especially applies to short-legged sheep, heavily fleeced as the merinos are to the extremities of their limbs. The time taken up sharpening his shears is a serious consideration to the shearer.

Bad or careless shearers, in order to give the sheep the appearance of being properly shorn, may either 'shingle' or 'feather' the fleeces they cut off. By 'shingling' is meant making a second cut over the same part of the body of the sheep, the first severing the staple towards the centre, and the second close to the skin; yet the whole fleece holds together and the damage may not be detected till closely examined. On the contrary, 'feathering' is plainly seen as soon as the fleece is shaken out; here the clip has been uneven, leaving patches of longer wool to be severed by a second cut. This leaves a quantity of short wool in the inside the fleece, which readily separates when the fleece is unrolled. 'Shingling' is the worst fault, as it quite ruins the staple for combing purposes.

In the mountain districts west of the tableland the average number of sheep a fairly good man will shear in a day of eight and a half hours varies from seventy to one hundred and twenty. On the northern plains near the Queensland border the average is one hundred and twenty to one hundred and seventy; and it is on record that the champion shearer of

Queensland clipped three hundred and twenty-seven sheep in nine hours. Such a man, in the language of 'the shed,' is termed a 'ringer.'

In the central plains on the Lachlan River the average is eighty to one hundred and twenty. With machines the numbers are of course considerably more. The men are paid £1 per hundred sheep; and out of this they have to provide rations, shears, sharpening-stones, oil, &c.

#### AN AUTUMN DAWNING.

NIGHT-VISITANTS of human homes,  
Grave Silence, winged Solitude  
Creep, hand in hand along the street,  
With stealthy step, in darkling mood,  
Back to their dwelling in deep wood.

The wind, that fiercely howled all night,  
Now sobs above the houses' tops,  
And wildly whistles through his palms,  
With sudden shrieks and sudden stops,  
And laughing as to earth he drops.

The dead leaves patter o'er the stones,  
And flit before the searching wind,  
Like footsteps of dead little ones  
Through chambers of the weary mind  
Where grief of them is left behind.

Like chieftains stripped of all their pomp  
By vile usurper, gaunt and high  
The naked trees, erect beneath  
Only the morn-star's glittering eye,  
Stretch thin arms imprecatingly.

For now the misty moon doth shroud  
Her tearful face—like widowed maid  
That draws a cloak around her grief,  
And goes with it to quiet and shade;  
And the wild morn is darker made.

Each dull house stands with stern cold front,  
Its secrets hid as by thick veil,  
Like epitaphless monument:  
And but the wind, with wanton will  
And wandering will, can tell the tale.

A thousand weary souls do rest  
In these—false, happy, true, or fair:  
Wild youth beside light slumbering age,  
Guilt with his arm around Despair,  
Sorrow with hand in Fealty's hair.

Perchance one dieth in the dark,  
Or haply there some mother brings  
An heir to day's swift-coming light,  
While here some watcher's 'Ave' rings:  
At nights in cities hap strange things.

Day's Angel hastens to the task,  
And homes accept the grateful light;  
The Dark Guard reads her scroll of doom:  
Sister, these souls have taken flight,  
Those hearts have broken in the night.

FRANKFORT SOMMERVILLE.

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